

## RELATIVE ADDRESSING FOR NETWORK ELEMENTS

### ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

5 A relative address protocol for communicating message packets along a linear chain network or quasi-linear chain network is disclosed. The protocol includes a relative destination address field that includes a counter having a preselected initial value at a source node. The initial value is a function of the desired number of node hops that the message packet should travel from the source node. The counter is adjusted in value at each subsequent node by a preselected step in value. When the counter value reaches a trigger value the message packet is accepted by a destination node. In a preferred embodiment, a relative source address field stores the initial value so that the destination node may return a status message to the source node.

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